

# Illinois U Library

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## Guided Free Reading

By DORIS SMITH \*

George Norvell states that "A permanent reading habit based on a love of reading for all normal children is the most important purpose of the school's instructional effort."<sup>1</sup> No doubt this has been true as long as there has been any quantity of worth-while books, but it is more important to us today than it has ever been before. "Since 1900, reading offered adults has increased over 170 per cent. . . . the required reading of officers and executives has increased 500 per cent since the century began."<sup>2</sup> We know that a democracy cannot function properly without an informed voting populace. A large part of this "being informed" is best acquired through wide and efficient reading. It is being increasingly expected in all fields of employment that people read materials relative to their work. Also, to those of us who read, it appears unlikely that the pleasure to be gained from reading will ever be entirely eclipsed by television. It does not require long years of teaching experience, though, for us to discover that reading is no longer one of a few activities with which a person necessarily fills his leisure hours. It is quite possible for adults and students to include in their busy schedules almost no reading. (Indeed, this seems to be the rule with many students.) Clearly, it is imperative that we build the desire to read. However, after a closer look, we realize that desire is not enough.

### We Need Quality as Well as Quantity

With the increased volume of printed matter comes an increased problem of selection and evaluation. It is not only necessary for the student to read widely, but he must read well and be able to discriminate. Ruth Strang cites the cases of two people who read beyond their comprehension and who merely succeeded in filling their minds with erroneous ideas.<sup>3</sup> I recall a student of mine who

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once selected *Moby Dick* from the library shelf. His IQ was recorded as 80, and his reading level was just a little beyond third grade. The false conceptions which he might have gained from that volume are alarming. Norvell points out that children often read much below the level that we would expect from their ages and intelligence. This became obvious to me when I found that ninety per cent of my new crop of sophomores admitted that they regularly read comic books. After a consideration of these facts, the truth of the following statement becomes obvious:

"Teachers often need to encourage their students to do more reading. But more often, they need to encourage better reading—better in choice of material, better in efficacy of procedure, better in the quality and quantity of retention."<sup>4</sup>

Arthur I. Gates points out that the two goals of reading well and gaining a love of reading are interrelated. "Force him (the student) to do all or most of his reading beyond the level at which he can read soundly with understanding and enjoyment, and you will soon destroy both interest and ability."<sup>5</sup> The rewards of reaching these goals in the teaching of reading are many. Strang tells us, "Among the results of effective reading which might be mentioned are: a broader sympathy with and understanding of human nature as revealed in distinguished fiction and biography; the habit of suspending judgment on complex questions; and a more fluent self-expression."<sup>6</sup> We recognize in this list some of the most important aims of all education. Our problem becomes, how can we teach this kind of reading and get these desirable results in our students?

For many years it was believed that the answer was to be found in the effective teaching of the classics to all students. Rosenblatt gives us many instances in which students gained the same insight into human behavior which Ruth Strang mentioned above from a study of various classics.<sup>7</sup> No doubt, this value does exist in the great literature of the past, and certainly many people have found it. To propose that we strip our educational program of its traditional literature is to commit a grave error against the vast number of individuals who would find it very rewarding. After all, we must not forget that one of the most wonderful qualities of man is his unique ability to record his experiences and feelings and to pass them down to succeeding generations. However, we must also face the attitude toward the classics which was expressed by Henry Williamson: "To the ordinary Englishman the word 'classic' has a slightly chilling significance. During the process called education he has too often been bored by 'classics.' usually in those languages called dead. The fruits of the minds of rare men were offered to the immature consciousness. Offered? Well, as our brother of the angle offered his barbed hook to the frog. The frog accepted the offer;

and possibly in a Rannine Paradise he forgot the exactitude of the experience, and declared that it made a frog of him.”<sup>8</sup> In its human parallel this has many implications. Has our teaching of the classics been boring even though most of it has been in the language of the student? Quite possibly the answer must be yes. Is it possible that many students have “bit” on the classics and have later had a feeling of great accomplishment without either comprehending the literature or understanding the importance of it? As I think back over some of the responses that students of mine have made to *Julius Caesar*, I must recognize much lack of comprehension. Yet a few weeks ago, when I accompanied many of these same students on a trip, they proudly chanted the speeches of Mark Antony and Brutus as they rode in the school bus.

One of the main difficulties in the traditional approach is the fact that not all students are capable of comprehending the classics—at least not all at the same time. Strang points out that in our high schools we find a variation in reading ability from third grade level to that of a superior adult.<sup>9</sup> This problem is relatively new; it has not been very long since only those who could read were admitted to high school. It is almost inconceivable, in light of the present situation, that we could continue to try to fit all students into the same reading pattern. It seems that finally the implications of these findings are becoming widespread. Theodore Chatham reports that the school principals are aware of the problem. In a recent meeting they declared that the objective of the reading program should be to reach the optimum level for the individual; individual differences must be recognized.<sup>10</sup>

### Guided Free Reading Can Offer a Solution

It is not difficult for us to accept these aims for a reading program as correct and desirable, but the actual putting them into practice seems to be a Herculean task for the English teacher. She must teach students to read widely and like it. She must teach them to read well and be selective. She must teach them to be critical of everything they read. And, most important of all, she must not force them all to read the same things. All of this must be accomplished in groups of not less than thirty and in the short span of forty minutes per day. In the face of these difficulties, it is easy to become haphazard in teaching. Clearly, some type of “free-reading” program is indicated, but, if it becomes “at-random” reading, it can cause more damage than the traditional methods of teaching literature. We find that “A recreational, free reading program is most successful, paradoxically enough, when it is well guided by the teacher. Ultimately the actual selection of a book to read must be made by the pupil. The teacher, however, should assume responsi-

bility for helping provide a wide selection of books, for steering a pupil toward books that will be neither too hard nor too immature for him, and for helping children set up standards of their own for choosing something to read."<sup>11</sup> If the "free-reading" program is not guided, it cannot reach any of the goals which we have established as desirable. True, the students will allow for their own individual differences, but this may not mean selecting the proper book on the correct level. "Free reading" seems to be the only answer to the problem of individual differences, but we see that it requires guidance to be effective.

In such a "guided free-reading" program, LaBrant reports that the pupils read more books and covered a wider range of reading, they moved from narrative to "other types of literature," and they read a wide variety of types and content in Senior High. The list of authors most frequently read by her ninth graders included Shakespeare, Barrie, Galsworthy, Dickens, Dumas, Rostand, and Jane Austen.<sup>12</sup> Robert E. Potter reports that this type of reading system proved to be the answer to the common student objections to reading—they didn't have time, the library was inadequate, and they didn't know what to read.<sup>13</sup>

Fortunately, the English teacher is not asked to do all of the work on this problem alone. Many studies have been made which indicate the success that he can expect from the procedures that he uses, and many other teachers have recorded their experiences and ideas for his aid. For the purpose of examination of this literature we shall divide it into two categories: 1. Information about the student himself—his abilities, attitudes, and interests which he brings with him into the reading experience, and 2. Information concerning the methods which a teacher might use to help reach the goals of the "guided free-reading" program. The first category will help us to build wide reading through interests already present in the students, and the second one will help us to create an interest in improved and well-balanced reading in our students.

### Attitudes and Abilities

The attitudes of a child may completely control his interests as well as his understanding of his environment. Anne Selley McKillop<sup>14</sup> points out how the student's entire response to reading depends upon his attitudes. If you ask him to suggest relationships or important points, his answer is likely to be influenced by his attitude and may even be completely false. Students also reject reading matter because of attitudes. McKillop states. "One disconcerting characteristic of the responses of students in the present study was their tendency to label as false or stupid a passage which

did not fit in with *their* attitudes.”<sup>15</sup> Robert L. McCaul<sup>16</sup> found that children’s initial attitudes influenced their opinions of the motives ascribed to persons they read about, and that the stronger the attitude the greater was this effect. Rosenblatt<sup>17</sup> tells us about a girl who interpreted *Anna Karenina* with reference to her own family life. She was sympathetic toward Anna’s husband—“But there are people like that, with very warm hearts and intense affections, who are unable to let others know it. Why, my own father is like that!”<sup>18</sup> Strang<sup>19</sup> includes a case study of a minister who finds a lesson in all of his reading—even scientific matter. She also tells us about a writer who dramatized her reading to the point that her comprehension was inaccurate.

As teachers, we should recognize the presence of these attitudes whenever they exist and take measures to reduce them. Class discussion as well as individual conferences can be helpful for this purpose. We should also be aware of another important aspect of student attitudes. In all the successful reading programs reported, the students had a favorable attitude toward reading in general and toward their own reading improvement in particular. We all know from experience and observation that where these attitudes are not found, the reading program is likely to fail. It does not seem that the procedures used make as much difference as the presence or absence of these favorable attitudes. If all our methods aim to “make reading genuinely attractive to our students,”<sup>20</sup> the success of our reading program seems assured. If we, by our own enthusiasm and purpose, do not make the reading experience a pleasant and challenging one, no system that we use will produce the expected good results.

Concerning the abilities of our students, the most important thing that we must do is accept them. After we have determined the student’s reading ability, we must then begin his reading guidance on his own level. Ruth Strang tells us to begin at his present level and then progress as rapidly as possible. We must remember that his reading comprehension may be limited as much by his interests and his attitudes as by his actual intelligence. His progress may come in rapid strides as these attitudes and interests are changed, or it may be slow and painful as he improves his own reading techniques. The teacher, realizing this, must never force the student to fit into a set pattern, but must guide him skillfully as an individual.

### Interests

Margery Bernstein<sup>21</sup> made a study to find the relationship between interest and comprehension. She concluded that comprehension was more closely associated with interest than with read-

ability, and that the students did not distinguish between interest and ease. When their interest was high they were more creative, and they were better able to relate their reading to life situations. This is a strong point in favor of allowing our students to read what they find personally interesting. If we teach any literature in common (and there are many values in some of this) the material should be carefully selected according to the expected interests of the readers. There are some very fine studies which indicate these interests.

We have already mentioned the student interests reported by LaBrant in her study. Stella Center and Gladys Persons<sup>22</sup> have studied these interests in twenty New York High Schools. They found that 69.5% of the students preferred fiction and that this number decreased as the student got older. In Norvell's articles<sup>23</sup> we find that student interests in literary types followed this order: novel, play, short story, biography, essay, poem, letter, and speech. He felt that the boys were slighted in the material commonly taught. In his study,<sup>24</sup> he reports that reflective, philosophic, religious, and artistic reading matter became more popular as the student got older; narrative and dramatic reading remained about the same; and stories about the supernatural declined in popularity as the student matured. He found that many factors influence interests of children. The classroom atmosphere, the particular teacher, and the community played an important part. Age and intelligence did not seem to be very significant. The sex of the student did seem to make a great difference:

"The special factors which arouse boys' interest in reading materials, as revealed by the current study, are: adventure (outdoor adventure, war, scouting), outdoor games, school life, mystery (including activities of detectives), obvious humor, animals, patriotism, and male rather than female characters. Unfavorable factors for boys are: love, other sentiments, home and family life, didacticism, religion, the reflective or philosophical, extended description, 'nature' (flowers, trees, birds, bees), form or technique as a dominant factor, female characters.

"For girls the favorable special factors are: adventure without grimness (mild outdoor adventure, games, school life, detective and other mysteries), humor, animals, patriotism, love, other sentiments, home and family life, male and female characters. Unfavorable factors: grim adventure (including war), extended description, didacticism, form or technique as a dominant factor, and 'nature'."<sup>25</sup> Norvell concludes that the material read is more important than the teaching.

Ruth Strang<sup>26</sup> reports the results of a questionnaire about reading interests which she gave to students. To the question "What do you like to read about?" she received the usual stereotyped replies

—animals, mystery, adventure, love, themselves, science, sports, radio, history, and best-sellers. More revealing answers were found when they listed books that they thought should be written—other teenagers, solving problems of growing up, family and teacher relationships, boy-girl problems, vocations, and concern, eagerness, or fear of the future. They liked stories which were simple and had a free easy style, were brief, honest, and straightforward. The content should stress humor and action and should not be too "sexy." The students didn't like stories which were too difficult, too wordy, slow-moving, too monotonous, or too sentimental (especially the younger students), or which had little or no value, and had adult characters. The older students enjoyed current and past best-sellers. Very few listed classics; they considered them "old-fashioned," "unreal," and "long and drawn out." Shakespeare's language was a problem to them. Strang found a very wide range in the student's reading. It stretched from Shaw and Dostoevski to *Little Women* and even *The Bobbsey Twins*.

### We Can't Generalize

While all the above writers were searching for usable generalizations to help us understand student interests, they all found that there were so many exceptions that, at best, their rules could be used only to predict. The fact that the boy on the other side of the desk is fourteen and not exceptionally brilliant does not mean that the teacher should automatically hand him *Hot Rod* and go on about his business. One of my students, who fitted the above description, actually preferred Plato's *Crito*, and he read it with comprehension because of his great interest in the Greek civilization. This sort of thing we cannot overlook as teachers of English.

Wollner<sup>27</sup> studied these individual differences, their possible causes, and some of their results. She points out the danger in forming generalizations concerning individual reactions. There was not a high correlation of reading pattern with IQ, reading ability, environment (as we usually think of it), or even as much as was expected with sex. She did think that reading may be influenced by commonly ignored things such as early experiences in reading, social experiences at home and at school, and by adult encouragement of voluntary reading. Wollner then considered the types of satisfaction which children got from reading. In a few cases they derived intellectual satisfaction; they were interested in structure, words, and style. Some found psychological satisfactions. They used reading as an escape or substitute for reality. Some students associated reading with physical comfort and thus found physical satisfaction in the activity. One girl liked to read curled up in a window-seat with plenty to eat. Other students read for various

peripheral satisfactions such as gaining a feeling of independence from using the library and the pleasure of acquiring and handling books. The amount of reading seemed to be not as important as the type of satisfaction which the child got from it. It was pointed out in the case studies that the child who read excessively was likely to be as poorly adjusted as the one who avoided reading completely.

Wollner concludes that the reading response depends upon complex interrelationships among many factors. Each person has his own pattern; no single approach to reading is suitable. She finds it necessary to report many of her findings by the case-study method because of this absence of a general pattern. She stresses that reading should be only one of many recreational activities, and that the use that the student makes of reading is very important. "The clue to a particular child's adjustment in voluntary reading may be found in the meaning or value which reading holds for him."<sup>28</sup> If a student reads to avoid social contacts or responsibilities, he needs help.

Strang<sup>29</sup> also finds the case-study necessary in her study of reading patterns. She tells us that she abandons the idea of generalizations about types of patterns because of their complexity and uniqueness. The individual reading patterns seemed to reflect the subjects' entire past as well as their present needs. Many of the patterns seemed to revolve about a central core of interest, but this was not always the expected one. Here again, we find importance placed upon the reason for which the reading was done. "Reading seemed to be essentially functional."<sup>30</sup> Accessibility of material also seemed to be a factor.

In another article Strang again brings out the importance of having the correct purpose in reading. "*Help each student to set for himself goals of reading achievement.* These goals should include not only the narrow aspects of speed and efficient comprehension but also the broader fields of reading interests and appreciations."<sup>31</sup> We must keep all of these findings about the student himself in mind as we go on to examine the many methods suggested by which we may accomplish the goals of wide and efficient reading for our students.

### Methods We Can Employ to Stimulate Interest

"Taste in reading is not predetermined; it develops in a favorable environment with proper stimulation and guidance."<sup>32</sup> This type of atmosphere is what we all hope to establish in our own English classes. According to Strang the free reading program should be "graduated." It should be free, but carefully guided. The student should acquire what she refers to as "an expanding understanding of society."<sup>33</sup> The teacher should be armed with many

reading lists which the students may use for suggestions. The interests of the students should be studied over a period of years and *accurate* records must be kept. As a safeguard we need some kind of oral or written evidence that the student has actually read the book. Then we should evaluate the quality of the reading in terms of individual improvement. She suggests that we compare the books with current well-established lists. We should use many methods of stimulating interest in reading. There should be good books and magazines available in quantity, and reading must be made popular. Student endorsement of a book helps its popularity. We must allow time for both reading and discussion of reading. Strang suggests that we use reports with moderation—some stimulate comprehension. “Guidance implies a knowledge of the interests, the abilities, and the backgrounds of the students as well as a wide acquaintance with books and the appeals which books make to boys and girls.”<sup>34</sup> If the teacher is able to meet these standards, improvement is possible. In the study made by Center and Persons<sup>35</sup> they found that the student’s level of books was higher than that of magazines and papers. It is suggested that this difference was caused by teacher guidance in the selection of books.

Lorreene Ort<sup>36</sup> discovered that her students disliked reading because they were always clocked or tested, or had to report. She conducted classroom chats to discover likes and dislikes, and she found a wide range of needs. Her class appointed a library committee which imported books to the classroom and talked about them. As a result of this activity, the teacher grew familiar with books and how they suited children. She found that they enjoyed reading books a grade or two below their abilities. She now uses many methods to “sell” books. If a book seems unpopular, she places it on her desk and soon someone asks about it. She may read tantalizing snips from a book. On a few occasions she has told a student that a particular book was too advanced for him and thus challenged him into reading it. Student-prepared bulletin boards proved effective. She suggests that each class have a student librarian and assistants, or, even better, a library club. It would also be helpful to get a student book review published in the school or local paper.

Bond and Handlan<sup>37</sup> also list some ways to stimulate interest:

“1. Class time is taken to allow teachers an opportunity for suggesting books to the whole class or for having individual conferences with some pupils whose interest in reading seems low.

2. Other class periods are used to give children time to talk about books they like; to read peacefully, undisturbed by the pressure of an assignment; to go to the central library; to browse around among the books in the classroom library.

3. Every possible effort is made to advertise books.

4. Recreational reading is not made a requirement. The minute children have to read a certain number of books, the reading is no longer free or recreational. If children have to make any formal accounting of their reading, a great deal of the pleasure that should be associated with books is lost. Teachers, of course, want to know what their pupils are reading outside the regularly assigned textbooks and supplementary selections, but this information can be obtained very simply without forcing children to write book reports, give formal book talks, and take tests."

Lou LaBrant tells us that the reading program must include guidance. "Guidance is the gradual building up within the student of sufficient understanding to enable him to make his own decisions."<sup>38</sup> She points out that giving the student a list does not do this and that adults pay book clubs a lot of money to select their books for them. This guidance can be both individual and group. In class discussion students can talk about books and authors, bring out the problems of selection, and find out ways to select books. They can learn how to sample books and how to use the library in library periods. In individual conferences the teacher can get to know the student and his problems. It is important that the teacher match the right student with the right book. LaBrant tells us that files must be kept for guidance purposes. She has her students record the name, author, date of writing, date of setting, nationality of author, and place of setting. These facts help in discussion of the book. This discussion is very important. "The natural thing to do after reading a book is to talk about it."<sup>39</sup> She does not use book reports because they discourage reading. It is possible to determine whether the student has actually read the book by asking an occasional question such as "Were you satisfied with the outcome?" The teacher must understand the importance of reading and must read herself.

Gates<sup>40</sup> points out that this type of free reading, on a level at which the student can read well, is probably more important for the slow reader than for the superior one. Hudson<sup>41</sup> reminds us that class discussion can be used to point out unreal situations in books and help to steer students away from using literature as an escape. The teacher should aim "to give young people the type of literature which will promote maturity, but not force or delay it."<sup>42</sup> Again, we find that Horst<sup>43</sup> reported that class discussion of stories led to increased interest in reading. The values of discussion are very well stated by Rosenblatt. "We have seen that a free exchange of ideas will lead each student to scrutinize his own sense of the literary work in the light of the others' opinions. The very fact that the other students stress things that he may not have noticed, or report

a different general impression, will suggest that perhaps he has not done full justice to the work. He will turn to it again in order to point out the aspects that justify his opinions and to see what can justify the other students' responses." <sup>44</sup>

Besides using many of the methods already mentioned, Michael Romano <sup>45</sup> used outstanding students as group discussion leaders to stimulate the slower students. His students had panel discussions about books, movies, and problems of reading such as the comics. They played games with literature such as "Twenty Questions" and "What's My Line?" (I know that my own literary interests were partly developed in an effort to keep up with charades.) Romano's students kept a record of books that they read, with personal evaluations. He kept a large supply of books and also periodicals in his classroom. The periodicals were given special attention because it has been estimated that ninety per cent of the reading that the student does after his schooling is over will be in newspapers and periodicals.

We have already mentioned Strang's ideas about having a definite purpose in reading. Miller <sup>46</sup> also stresses this point. She believes that we must help students to know what they want and how to find it. The Warren English Project Bulletin <sup>47</sup> gives us a good explanation of purposeful reading. It states that adults read for reasons—*e. g.*, before travel, "how to win friends and influence people," how to be better parents and be better at hobbies. "They have learned that reading and 'doing' complement each other; activities are enriched by correlated reading, and reading itself takes on new meanings from actual experiences." <sup>48</sup> We should help children to realize the immediate usefulness of many kinds of reading, and their reading habits will grow in adulthood. Reading before going on a class trip will let the reading enrich the trip rather than the other way around. It is suggested that we encourage the student to read about his own special interests or to try to learn a new sport or hobby from reading about it. Some students could profit from reading about careers and personal development. If a class brings out purposes like these through discussion, it will be easier to avoid many of the less satisfactory purposes of reading.

Using methods of these types, many teachers have reported successful reading programs. Chambers <sup>49</sup> worked for extensive reading through a unit selected for interest to students. The class helped to set up aims, assemble usable material, and plan activities. They allowed time for reading, discussion, conferences, dramatization, and creative work. The teacher was careful to arouse interest at the beginning and to plan a conclusion to tie up the activities. Morland <sup>50</sup> used an entire period for talking about reading problems. The class decided that they needed to broaden their patterns of

reading. She then prepared a list of small parts of many books which the students could read to get an idea about that type of book. More credit was given if the student read the entire book—which most of them did. In the classes of Margaret Boutelle <sup>51</sup> the students brought books to class after a discussion of why they read. Later they were asked for comments and recommendations about their books. When they found that many of them had trouble knowing what to discuss about a book, they made out a long list of general questions to serve as a guide. The teacher was careful to point out that not all their questions would apply to every book.

Lisbeth Jensen <sup>52</sup> began with her seniors by having them read from authors of their own ancestral background and ancestral countries. Classes before had developed book lists of only those books that they understood and appreciated. Each student then selected a topic related to his reading such as "The Similarities of People of Different Nationalities" and "Attitudes Toward Women in Different Countries." They varied their methods of reporting so that the whole class could share. There were talks, monologues, panels, dramatizations, and mock radio programs. Jensen mentions the value of allowing a wide leeway in reading, trying a study of best-sellers of all times, using a special interest study—especially at the end of the term when you can ask the students to select what they've wanted to read but had no time for, and talking about books. She concentrates upon the topic selected for reading and working in groups, not upon the individual book read.

The students of Sadie Tabackman <sup>53</sup> also started with reading about their interests in social problems. They made book reports and kept book lists, but it seems that they developed an attitude of acceptance toward reading and books. Robert Potter <sup>54</sup> limited his free reading program by only three rules:

1. No picture magazines
2. No comic books
3. No texts from other courses

He kept a bibliography of books for all ages and all countries which had been checked by the library staff. From that point, he merely assisted in selection of books, kept records of what was read, and maintained discipline. No reports were required, but the students talked informally among themselves about books. He found that his free reading program was considered valuable by the students and resulted in more reading.

### Materials

We have mentioned that it is advisable for the teacher to have a wide variety and abundant supply of reading matter and reading

lists. *Gateways to Readable Books*<sup>55</sup> includes listings by content as well as by types of literature. For each book there is a short description and its reading level is indicated. *Books for You*<sup>56</sup> and *Adventuring With Books*<sup>57</sup> provide a very large selection of titles arranged in special interest groups. The elementary school list includes the grade level of the books. *Social Understanding Through Literature*<sup>58</sup> provides a fine list of books arranged according to sociological problems. The descriptions of the books are very good and the introduction is quite valuable to the teacher. There are practical suggestions which are based upon the latest studies, and there are many suggestions for group discussions about books. All these lists are useful in helping the teacher select books for school and classroom libraries, and the students can use them to aid in book selection. In this way, they help the teacher guide free reading.

Many times students will want to acquire books of their own. It is helpful for the teacher to be aware of the book editions listed by Frogner.<sup>59</sup> She included in her list only books under \$1.25. "Cadmus Books" (E. M. Hale Co., Eau Claire, Wisconsin), "Young Moderns" (Doubleday and Co., Garden City, New York), and "Pocket Book, Jrs." (Pocket Books, Inc., 30 6th Ave., Rockefeller Center, New York 20, New York) are all good sources of current literature. Classics may be obtained from "Rainbow Classics," "Newberry Classics," "Children's Favorites," "Illustrated Junior Library," and "Thrushwood Books." There are two book clubs for young people which can be very successful in some classes: "The Scholastic Book Service" (7 E. Twelfth Street, New York 3, New York) and "The Teen Age Book Club" (7 E. Twelfth Street, New York 3, New York).

For the teacher's records to help in guidance, *The Cumulative Reading Record*<sup>60</sup> is a folder with a small amount of space for the student to record information about each book that he reads. Inserts are available for the student who fills the blanks on the folder. *My Reading Design*<sup>61</sup> helps to develop habits of wide reading. The student is encouraged to fill the sections with numbers which indicate books that he has read. Each section deals with a different subject or type of literature.

From my experience as a teacher of English, I have become aware that the reading problems of our young people are real ones. A great part of the future success and stability of these students depends upon finding workable solutions to the problems in reading. In order to meet this challenge, it is important that teachers never allow themselves to stop reading. The teacher should also be sensitive to the reactions of children toward books—both as groups and as individuals. If a negative attitude concerning reading is ever discovered, the teacher should regard it as a danger signal. At this

point the teacher must be prepared and eager to employ any and all methods possible to build enthusiasm for reading. The task of raising the level of student reading needs to be kept in mind always—even though the progress may seem slight at times. Any English teacher who sincerely loves good books, who realizes their great importance, and who is willing to respond to the changing needs of boys and girls should be able to initiate a successful "guided free reading" program.

#### NOTES

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### BEST POETRY AND PROSE

The annual issues of poetry and prose written by Illinois high school students will appear somewhat later this year than usual. Please send the choicest writing of your students to J. N. Hook, 121 Lincoln Hall, Urbana, Illinois, *to reach him no later than January 15, 1955.*

Please observe these regulations:

1. Do not submit more than five pieces of prose or ten poems, unless you send a school publication. It is preferable, in sending a publication, to enclose two copies, one for the person who will select the poetry, one for the selector of prose.
2. Do not submit writing by a student who has already graduated.
3. Typed (double-spaced) manuscripts are preferred.
4. At the *end* of each selection please follow this exact form of endorsement:

JERRY GREEN, Ambrosia High School, '56

Louise Glenn, teacher

Note that this endorsement is needed for selections in a publication as well as for those submitted separately.

5. Enclose with the manuscripts a signed statement to this effect: "To the best of my knowledge each of the enclosed manuscripts is original."